



State of Utah

DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES DIVISION OF OIL, GAS AND MINING

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
November 26, 2001

STATE TO CLOSE ABANDONED MINES IN SAN RAFAEL SWELL AREA

The Utah Division of Oil, Gas and Mining's Abandoned Mine Reclamation Program has begun planning the closure of abandoned uranium mines in the San Rafael Swell, approximately 20 miles north of Hanksville. The Temple Mountain Project would close approximately 140 uranium mines in a historically significant area.

"We are particularly sensitive to the historic and cultural values of the area," stressed project coordinator Chris Rohrer. "The project design will allow us to protect the public from the dangers associated with these abandoned mines while maintaining the historic nature of the site."

The area has long been a popular recreation destination of history buffs, all-terrain vehicle enthusiasts, and mountain bikers. Unfortunately, there is also abundant evidence that people are entering the mines, perhaps unaware of the hazards they pose. Among the hazards that can be found in abandoned mines are pockets of dead air that could instantly overcome the adventurer, unstable mines workings that could collapse, and shafts that easily go unnoticed in the dark. In addition to these hazards unwary visitors are also exposed to radiation and radon gas.

The San Rafael Swell area has seen mining activity for more than a century. Most of the mining activity occurred prior to World War I and again from about 1948 through the 1950's. Although there are still some active claims, mining declined significantly in the 1960's.

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